

Stage and The Players.

'The Straw' Shows the Effect of the Sanatorium Drama

'Love at First Sight' No More Abhorrent to Eugene O'Neill Than It Is to William Shakespeare.

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

LOVE at first sight is no more abhorrent to O'Neill the playwright than it is to Shakespeare, author of a number of well known and once popular plays. When *Anna Christie*, on the foggy deck of the coal barge, listens to the love song of the Irish stoker—after having first knocked him down as a disciplinary measure—she succumbs to the obvious sincerity and ardor of his passion. Love comes not at first sight, it may be, but just as suddenly to the newspaper reporter when he realizes that only the hopefulness of the heroine in "The Straw" may bring her relief.

The nurses talk about what she needs as casually as they do of all the patients, although they confess to a special affection for the little girl who has kept falling under the care of the doctors in the mountain hospital. The man she met and grew to love has lived to feel his ailing lungs healed and go again into the world. He comes back to her and finds her dying. "Just pretend that you love her, whether you do or not," is the prayer of the nurse, who knows how little life will remain to her when she is sent to the State Farm.

He starts to make the pretence when love comes in its warmest and purest form, and the girl he had felt only a sympathetic indifference for is in his arms when the curtain falls. "They" are likely to get better when they have something to live for. The nurse's scientific discussion of the case, although it is touched with affection, lingers in the memory after the play is over. It imparts the one optimistic note to the drama. Whether or not the delayed affection of the man she loves will improve the girl's physical condition is a question about which the audience of course knows nothing. Yet the irresistible longing for the happy ending imparts a sense of optimism to the final words of "The Straw."

O'Neill's play is generally so hopeless in tone that this final relief from its gloom surprises the spectators into a belief that they may not, after all, have been watching such a complete destruction of all that life may mean to a girl in love. She has been by degrees bereft of everything that she might cherish. Her lover has disappeared after taking fright at the first intimation of a fatal disease. The children, for whom she sacrificed herself, have lost interest. The home she was in the habit of guarding has been handed over to a new stepmother. One by one these little tragedies rock a narrow existence.

After all, the curtain falls on an unresolved chord. Will hope bring life back to her? Can a patient so far advanced in tuberculosis be ever restored by the fulfillment of her desires? At last, the man she has adored loves her. At last there will be somebody to take the place of all those who have passed out of her life. Will this happiness and hope of a life with the man she has so long desired bring her health again? Mr. O'Neill does not answer the question.

No playwright of the day seems to promise so much for the American theatre as Mr. O'Neill. "The Straw" is a remarkably logical and human drama. When the author selects subjects that interest the public as well as him, there need be no end to his success. So far none of his works has equalled in originality and imagination "Emperor Jones." There was immense promise in "Beyond the Horizon," and an undeniably bizarre and tantalizing, if somewhat repulsive, appeal about "Diff'rent." None of his works seems so commonplace to the writer as "Anna Christie," and this is not altogether due to the readjusted ending. All these plays are immeasurably superior to the average American drama. Indeed, Mr. O'Neill seems to lack few qualities needed to make him appreciated as widely by the theatre public as he is by the little group that studies his work.

British Connubial Bliss.

When did the deep affection between married couples become such a distinguishing mark of British family life that the playwrights had to celebrate it? Two plays of the last week had such a compelling pair of wives and husbands as the stage has rarely seen. In "The Titled" the wife and husband quarrelled mildly over the acceptance of the Government's offer. She wanted it; he did not. The usual difference of opinion over the question came out for a hearing.

Yet there was never a harsh word. Just when it seemed as if Mr. and Mrs. O'Neill might begin to differ seriously, they sat down on a sofa directly in the middle of their drawing room and embraced one another. There was no hint of sudden passion in the adventure. They merely folded one another deliberately in their respective arms and enjoyed themselves until an intruder interrupted them. They bickered affectionately, disputed lovingly. Such a picture of marital happiness is rare in the British drama or any other.

The Broxoppes Also Love.

They had, so to speak, nothing on the Broxoppes. They were, if possible, still more demonstrative. Only the eagle eye of the butler who had been in service to a duke, kept them in order at all. It was almost impossible to look at the stage of the Punch and Judy Theatre at any time between 8:30 and the three hours that followed without seeing Iden Payne on the point of kissing Miss Pamela Gaythorne. No wonder the butler was rather put out by such insistent osculation even if it were wholly domestic in character. Butlers have feelings.

When an advanced young woman announces that she didn't believe in kissing, Mr. Broxopp could only explain such a phenomenon on the theory that she never had tried it. Yet he was supposed to be the inventor of a health food. "The Titled" and "The Great Mr. Broxopp" is very deliberate, as perhaps family kissing should be. Or it may be deliberate to keep it in step with the play. Its rhythm is undeniably deliberate.

This is rarely the pace for comedy. Certainly Mr. Payne's venture would seem to have a better chance of success were he to make it move more rapidly. He would have to begin by stepping up himself. Artificial and fantastic as the acting of George may have been when he exploded and bubbled over as a baronet who knew less than he thought of finance, he at least woke up the play whenever he appeared. Sometimes, it really looked as if he were necessary. Not only the play but the audience was more than once on the point of snoring.

Mr. Milne had the courage of his

convictions when he wrote a comedy with three acts and a prologue. The first division lasts to be sure only a quarter of an hour. It shows the young artist in his comparative poverty unsuccessfully submitting advertising designs which are quite steadily refused. As if this were not archaic enough there is a comic servant who talks about the single chop for dinner and the broad and cheese. The scene is laid in the late 90's and Mr. Milne may be merely showing what a relentless realist he may be. Miss Gaythorne wears the puffed sleeves and the gored skirt of the day. He will follow the prevailing technique of the period. But he goes further back. He only stops short of Madison Morton. He quite fairly restores T. H. Robertson.

The only trace of any professional requirement which the playwrights seem to recognize to-day is the importance of the single scene. With prices of paint and canvas soaring far above the skill of the dramatists and the public indifferent, three separate scenes seem scandalously extravagant. But other times, other ways. There are frequent evidences of the earlier date at which "The Great Broxopp" was written. It must antedate "Belinda," far back as that seemed. By the time he had reached "Mr. Pim Passes By" the playwright may readily have been convicted of Sardoodledom, so comparatively expert had he become. Yet the Sardoodledom is, after all, only comparative.

None of the Telephone. Arnold Bennett weakens the dramatic quality of "The Titled," which in its theme is already sufficiently dated by the preposterous character of the final scene. It is, of course, incredible that a young girl should write such scathing political articles under a pseudonym that all London is talking of her. It is equally improbable that the man who bears the name she has selected as her own should happen to fall into her own family of all the others in the world and there be discovered and disclosed as a fraud. Coincidence could not be asked to travel further along the line of life. Such an impossible event makes "The Titled" so ungrounded that it could never stand up even so long as its subject was timely.

But there is one ground on which the Arnold technique, generally crude as it is, must receive the highest praise. There is not the tinkle of a telephone bell from the beginning to the end of his play. No character in order to put the audience in possession of important facts whispers into it over the telephone. Nor does any important operation of this hero's mind come to



Miss JANET BEECHER in "A BILL OF DIVORCEMENT" Times Square Theatre.

Miss MARY RYAN in "ONLY 38" Cort Theatre.



Miss EULA GUY in "The GREAT BROXOPP" Punch and Judy Theatre.

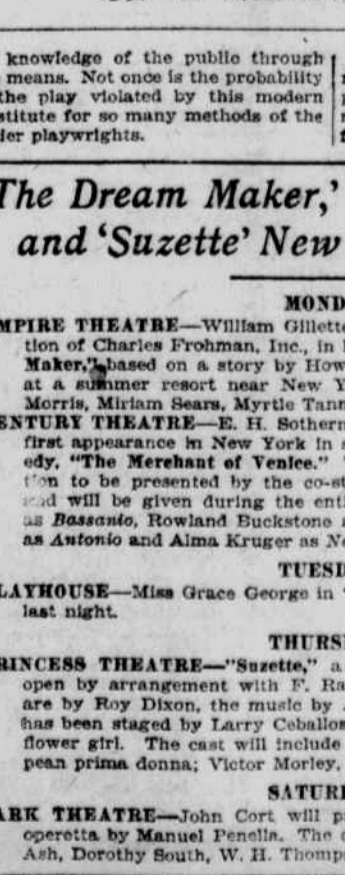


Miss MARIE ASTROVA in "SUZETTE" at The Princess Theatre.

WILLIAM GILLETTE in "The DREAM MAKER" Empire.



Miss ALMA TELL in "MAIN STREET" National Theatre.



Miss JULIETTE DAY in "WE GIRLS" 48th St. Theatre.

'The Dream Maker,' 'The Wild Cat' and 'Suzette' New Plays of This Week

MONDAY.
EMPIRE THEATRE—William Gillette will be presented under the direction of Charles Frohman, Inc., in his new play of reality, "The Dream Maker," based on a story by Howard E. Morton. The scenes are laid at a summer resort near New York. In the company are William Morris, Miriam Sears, Myrtle Tannahill and Charles Laite.

CENTURY THEATRE—E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe will make their first appearance in New York in several years in Shakespeare's comedy, "The Merchant of Venice." This is the fourth and last production to be presented by the co-stars during their New York season and will be given during the entire week. Frederick Lewis appears as Bassanio, Rowland Buckstone as Lancelot Gobbo, Sydney Mather as Antonio and Alma Kruger as Nerissa.

TUESDAY.
PLAYHOUSE—Miss Grace George in "Marie Antoinette," postponed from last night.

THURSDAY.
PRINCESS THEATRE—"Suzette," a musical comedy in two acts, will open by arrangement with E. Ray Comstock. The book and lyrics are by Roy Dixon, the music by Arthur Guiterman and the production has been staged by Larry Ceballos. It is a Parisian story of a gypsy flower girl. The cast will include Frank Lalor, Marie Astrova, European prima donna; Victor Morley, John Sherry and Marjorie Booth.

SATURDAY.
PARK THEATRE—John Cort will present "The Wild Cat," a Spanish operetta by Manuel Penella. The cast will include Marion Green, Sam Ash, Dorothy South, W. H. Thompson and others.

supplanted the soliloquy as a means of psychological revelation. It has even become the substitute for skill, since it has rendered it unnecessary for the actor to exercise skill in facial expression.

It has indeed been called upon to perform so many services for the incomplete playwright that it is refreshing to find a drama in which it is not necessary—or is, at all events, not called in as a means of S. O. S. It would be so easy to conclude by the theorem that no playwright who knows his business really needs the telephone if this play did not so unmistakably prove that Mr. Bennett is a dramatist knows very little about his business.

Saluting the Stars.

A curiously old fashioned trick of stage management was observed last week in one of the new plays. When the star entered the scene the stage was occupied by all the leading characters. In a second every eye was fixed on him. While he delivered his opening speech the actors watched him as intently as if they expected him to float slowly to the ceiling or perform some other equally startling physical phenomenon. But he did nothing of the kind. He merely delivered his opening speech. Then the actors were allowed to proceed with the business of the play—the other business, that is, than making the star important.

First of a Series of Teas In Aid of The Curtain

The first of a series of teas given in the interest of The Curtain, the proposed repertoire theatre of the West Side will be held this afternoon in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bennett, 950 Park avenue.

The curtain organization is conducting its campaign for membership in this new venture and from time to time will be entertained by the various professional and artistic persons who are cooperating in the movement. Among those who are working in behalf of The Curtain and for whom Mr. and Mrs. Bennett will entertain are Mrs. John W. Alexander, Miss Margaret Anglin, Miss Edith Ellis, Mrs. Minnie Madden Fiske, Miss Simon Frankel, Mrs. Ben Ali Hargis, Miss Clara Mannes, Miss Emma Mills, Miss Adrienne Morrison, Miss Margaret Morton, Mrs. Vera de Cordova Sanville, George Arliss, Lionel Atwill, Holbrook Blinn, Frederick Bird, G. Richard Davis, John Drinkwater, Edward Ellis, Childie Haasam, Livingston Platt, Eli Jacques Kahn, Eugene O'Neill, Willy Postany, Samuel T. Shaw, Robert E. Simon, Maurice Switzer, Deems Taylor, Jesse Weil and S. J. Woolf.

Did You Hear?

What Mr. Erlanger Thinks of Giving Away Theatre Tickets.

By LUCIEN CLEVELAND.

THE business Gibraltar of the theatre world is, of course, A. L. Erlanger, which is one of the first principles of his career that every theatre manager learns if he is trying to stay in the show business. Mr. Erlanger is one of the men who were most influential in putting amusements on the same basis that exists in other great industries. He did more than anybody else to eliminate the fly by night, speculative and uncertain elements that had long been thought inseparable from the methods of the theatre manager.

It is to him therefore that one refers always any question of ways and means that may arise in the profession. Certain matters recently troubled the reporter for THE NEW YORK HERALD. He did not understand, for instance, why theatre managers who were supposed to sell them should be advertising prominently that they were giving away theatre tickets. Whether it was for purposes of education or mere diversion, or for old shoes or for any kind of old clothes, or for any object whatever, it seemed contrary to all business principles to be giving away what they are in the business to sell.

Mr. Erlanger was therefore appealed to for an opinion on the subject. He did not want to talk about it. He would not talk about it. But he was willing after a while to recite a little parable which he framed in these words:

"After every war a lot of crazy notions seem to spring up in the minds of men. The show business always does get back to normal, and it will again."

Do you get that? Although Mr. Erlanger absolutely refused to be interviewed on the subject of giving away theatre tickets, it seems possible, indeed, without too much pondering, quite possible, to grasp what he thinks on the subject.

Why They Seem Fewer.

The following letter has reached the desk of this commentator on theatrical matters:

LUCIEN CLEVELAND,
THE NEW YORK HERALD:
Dear Sir:
I read with interest your intimation that English actors are returning to their own shores. It is true that some of the best known, such as Philip Merivale, have gone back. But do you know why? They are returning in the hope of finding some of the jobs that must have been left vacant by the small army that has been decimating on the United States since last spring. Never were there so many new arrivals from the English stage. Not only are there young ones, as there used to be, but the more mature representatives of the British theatre are also flocking here in numbers unprecedented. It is quite true, as you observe, that some of the better known Englishmen have gone back. Over here we are sure they must have gone to fill some of the places that the immigrants to New York have left vacant. The arrivals are just as numerous as they were before the war.

He Thought So Too.

The Russian singer had to have an interpreter. At all events, he was not here long before he was constantly in the society of a countryman, who accompanied him everywhere. He even went to the theatre with him. The agent put a plan before the singer. Simultaneously he explained the conditions and argued the benefits of it. The interpreter explained. The singer arose to talk with greater freedom. He roared in Russian. He sang in a delicate pianissimo. He shouted in his earnestness and whispered sagaciously. He danced around the stage knocking over chairs and waste baskets. Threw up the window and looked out. Sprinkled a little French in the speech and then relapsed into Russian. The time he spent in the chair. Still he seemed to talk. Finally he showed signs of running down. His breath came slowly. The words were less frequent to the minute. Gradually he was silent. He had finished answering the agent.

"What did he say all that time?" asked the agent turning to the interpreter who had listened intently. "Oh, he says, he says," the interpreter answered. "He says he thinks so too."

"Gosh was that all," gasped the agent in the theatre box. "Gradually he was silent. He had finished answering the agent."

Taking It by the Year.

It is not so surprising that the theatre managers are able to smile in spite of the indifference of the public this year to what they have to offer them if you happen to be on the inside and know just how impractical are in the habit of counting a season's loss as a profit. Judging by what a manager told the reporter for THE NEW YORK HERALD they still have a time to smile in.

"No manager of any importance," said the man who controls one of the important syndicates, "thinks of counting his losses by the week or even by the month. He reckons if he really is a manager, by the season. He can never tell when the tide may turn so decisively that he may be made rich or poor, so he waits until the end of the theatre year to make sure. There are uncertainties enough in the theatre business. It would turn the hair of any theatre man altogether white in a short time, however, if he tried to reckon every week just where he stood on the season. The big man of the theatre world does business by the year."

The Music They Play.

Musicians were discussing the exclusive and highly artistic organization which gives concerts of such an extremely musical character that only the most advanced audience are able to enjoy what is given there.

"Just to think," one of the admirers of the society exclaimed in rapture, "the society performs both vocal and instrumental works which have rarely if ever been played before. You can hear there music that you can never be able to listen to anywhere else. No other organizations ever perform it."

"Why don't they perform it?" asked the last man to join the group. "Because it's all so bad," interrupted one who was not at all in favor of the

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